Web Browser Loneliness   more...

The Internet has become an indispensable database of knowledge and information. And the World Wide Web (Web) is the most popular tool for information retrieval from the Internet. It supports asynchronous communication, particularly information dissemination based on documents of various media types. Although synchronous commuication is not supported by the Web's native mechanisms, it has been integrated by means of protocol handlers, native or interpreted plug-ins, and other extension methods in Web clients.

Millions of people are browsing at the same time, sometimes hundreds or thousands the same Web site concurrently. However, people browsing the Web are still unaware of other fellow browsers. Everyone is browsing individually. There are no indiciations of other people, other than increased delay and congestion at certain times of the day. Browsing the Web is like shopping downtown without people on the street. There are not even sales people in the virtual shops and department stores. If it is good or bad to meet people on the street is left to the opinion of the reader. Nevertheless most humans want to meet others. And it is doubtful that online stores can afford not to talk to the potential customer in the long term.

The Web appears as mesh of documents, seemingly lifeless and static. This actually is wrong. there are many people around. Some are moving very fast from page to page. Others are walking slowly. People go on the Web to work, to find information, or to have fun. Others are just looking around without a certain destination like window shopping. There are even unmanned vehicles - robots - on the streets to pick up information. Thus there is plenty of life. But it is unfortunately hidden from users.

The real world analogy gives a strong indication that an important component - the user dimension - is missing on the Web. Adding the user dimension turns the Web into a real cyberspace.

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